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Ministry of Advanced Education

PROVINCE FUNDS BIGGEST SCIENCE EXPERIMENT IN HISTORY

BURNABY – The Province is providing $4 million towards the world's largest scientific experiment, designed to unlock the origins of the universe, announced Advanced Education Murray Coell today.

ATLAS, the most elaborate particle physics experiment in the world, will explore the fundamental nature of matter and the basic forces that shape our universe. It is located at the Centre for European Nuclear Research near Geneva, Switzerland and contains the Hadron Collider, the world's largest scientific instrument, which will be capable of creating mini-black holes and reproducing Big Bang-like conditions by smashing together particles that have been accelerated to velocities nearing the speed of light. Scientists hope to answer the question of how the universe was created with data developed from ATLAS.

"By investing in significant projects like ATLAS we are continuing to support local excellence in research that is creating an impact around the globe," said Coell. "This money will help fund data analysis for what has been described as the biggest science experiment in history."

Once the experiment begins vast amounts of data, the equivalent of five million DVDs a year, will flow from the collider to an international grid of computer data analysis centres around the world. The ATLAS Data Analysis Centres, located in 10 countries, is being led in Canada by Simon Fraser University. These centres will function together as the world's largest computer grid, and will analyze the data flowing from the Large Hadron Collider.

The ATLAS Experiment is the largest collaborative effort ever attempted in the physical sciences. There are more than 2,000 physicists and engineers participating from 150 universities and 35 countries. Research collaborators from 10 Canadian universities are also contributing.

"The ATLAS Data Centre is Canada's contribution to an experiment set to explore the basic forces shaping the universe, said Mario Pinto, Simon Fraser University vice-president, research. "We are grateful for the funding from the provincial government that has made it possible for Canadian scientific input into this high-profile international project."

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A total of 579 projects and over $390 million in funding have been approved by the provincial government under the British Columbia Knowledge Development Fund. This funding has leveraged $405 million from the Canada Foundation for Innovation and another $344 million from other non-provincial government sources, for a total investment in British Columbia's research infrastructure of over $1 billion.

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